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Title of paper: **Open and Distance Learning Programme and Learner Outcomes: A review of Empirical Evidence**

Sub-theme: Training programme evaluation

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### **Abstract**

There is an increasing interest in examining the issues associated with higher learning institutions, both within Malaysia and in other countries around the globe. Due to the impact of global education market, high competition and a shift towards mass higher education, concerns about the standard of the programmes offered and the demands for public accountability have become crucial. The number of learners enrolled into programmes offered through open and distance learning (ODL) in Malaysia has expanded remarkably. For instance, learners enrolled at Open University Malaysia have increased tremendously from 753 learners in August 2001 to 75,000 learners in January 2009. This increasing number of enrolments indicates that more people are interested in learning and enhancing their competencies by pursuing a higher degree qualification. However, the question on how far the ODL programme affects the learner outcomes is still unanswered. Therefore, this study reviews the empirical research evidences on ODL programmes in higher learning institutions and the learner outcomes. The focus of this study is to answer two key questions: (i) Are learners achieving the outcomes expected? and (ii) If they are, are these outcomes the direct result of the programme, or of other factors? Empirical research articles from various academic sources such as refereed journals, proceedings and theses are explored. The results of this study are hoped to present the status of empirical research evidences on ODL programmes and learner outcomes. It is also hoped that this study will grant significant information for future research and fill the current gaps.

Keywords: Open and distance learning, learner outcomes, curriculum programme evaluation

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